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RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 2760  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ROME 000239

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DEPT FOR NEA, EUR/WE AND S/I

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TAGS: [PARM](#) [PREL](#) [UNSC](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#) [IT](#)

SUBJECT: IRAQ: ITALY-US-UK TRILATS, JANUARY 19, 2006

REF: ROME 119

Classified By: Pol M/C David D. Pearce for Reasons 1.4 (a), (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. Italy confirmed it will lead a Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Dhi Qar, for which it would provide its own security, and the UK previewed its plans for a PRT in Basra. U.S.-UK-Italy agreed on the concept for the PRTs as providing capacity-building for local authorities. Italy volunteered to continue and expand police training in Dhi Qar and supported expanding the NATO training mission in Iraq. It is prepared to consider the added task of border guard training. All stressed the importance of Iraq forming a broadly inclusive government with the participation of Sunnis. Looking ahead in 2006, the three coalition partners agreed on the need for wider international involvement in tandem with a gradual shift in emphasis from a military coalition focused on security to a broad partnership dedicated to the success of the new Iraq.

¶2. (C) The Italians were quick to stress that Defense Minister Martino's statement to the Italian parliament indicating that Italy would finish its military mission in Iraq by year's end did not mean that Italian forces would depart before security conditions allowed or without consulting coalition partners. Italian opposition parties nevertheless had been quick to seize on Martino's remarks as ammunition for their own calls for withdrawal in a separate January 18 meeting with Deputy S/I Deutsch. The trilateral meeting was a useful exchange that all agreed should reoccur in late spring. End summary.

¶3. (SBU) The U.S., Italy, and UK held trilateral consultations on Iraq on January 19 in Rome. The U.S. delegation consisted of Deputy Senior Advisor for Iraq Robert Deutsch, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs Michael Coulter, Joint Staff Deputy J-5 RADM William Sullivan, CENTCOM Deputy J-5 BG Mark Kimmitt, NEA/I Officer Peter Evans, EUR/RPM Officer Tony Baird, Joint Staff J-5 LtCol Paul Muller, CENTCOM J-5 LtCol Chris Goedeke, Embassy Political Minister Counselor David Pearce, Pol-Mil Counselor Jonathan Cohen, PolOff Susanne Rose, and DAO LtCol John Hesford. Italy's delegation consisted of MFA Iraq Task Force Director Gherardo La Francesca, Ambassador-Designate to Baghdad Maurizio Melani, MFA NATO Office Director Gianni Bardini, MFA Office Director for Middle East Development Cooperation Federica Ferrari Bravo, Diplomatic Advisor to

Defense Minister Martino Achille Amerio, Diplomatic Advisor to PM Berlusconi Marco Carnelos, Deputy J-3/J-5 RADM Mario Rino Me, J-3/J-5 Col. Stefano Cont, Col. Roberto Milano, and Col. Rosario Castellano. MFA DG for the Mediterranean and Middle East Riccardo Sessa, MFA Political Director Giulio Terzi, Diplomatic Advisor to PM Berlusconi Francesco Talo', Joint Operations Staff Commander Lt.Gen. Fabrizio Castagnetti, and Chief of Planning BG Roberto Lamana joined the lunch discussion. The British delegation consisted of FCO Iraq Policy Unit Director Dominic Asquith, Iraq Policy Unit Pol/Mil Section Head Kevin McGurgan, MOD DG for Operations Policy Martin Howard, Lt.Col. Mike Thorton, Deputy Head of Mission Alastair McPhail, DATT Mike Montagu, and Political Counselor Rebecca Fabrizi.

PRTS: UK ready to go in Basra, Italy Sets Sights on Dhi Qar  
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14. (C) S/I Deutsch initiated the PRT discussion, emphasizing the concept is still a work in progress and the U.S. has not yet made a formal decision on expansion beyond the three "proof-of-concept" PRTs already in place. Local Iraqi leaders have reacted positively, he said, stressing the need to present PRTs as an effort to support local governments rather than increase international control or return to CPA-like structures. PRTs cannot, however, supplant security forces. All concurred with the general strategic concept of the PRTs as a vehicle for capacity-building for local authorities and strengthening ties with the central government, with an emphasis on local ownership.

15. (C) The UK, which circulated a notional wire diagram for the Basra PRT it plans to stand up, is in the process of

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selecting its PRT leader and representative to the National Coordination Team (NCT), and envisages three PRT deputies: a U.S. civilian, a civilian Dane, and a UK military officer. The UK was open to the Italian suggestion of incorporating UN and other international organization participation, including the EU (however the UK wiring diagram only includes the UN/SIDG with a dotted line suggesting less than a formal role). Echoing the need for Iraqi consent, McGurgan said the southeast governors are all on board with the PRT concept.

16. (C) Italy announced it had formally decided to lead a PRT in Dhi Qar Province, though the details still need to be worked out. Italy also welcomed participation from other countries and hoped for a slot in the NCT. La Francesca was confident Italy could stand up the Dhi Qar PRT in a very short time. Lt. Gen. Castagnetti said Italy's military is ready to provide security and other support, such as transport and logistics, as required. Amb. Melani echoed the importance of local ownership and an increased role for international organizations, especially the EU. (Note: Amb. Melani's current position is Italy's representative to the EU's Political and Security Committee. End note.) Stressing the need for flexibility, La Francesca said each PRT must adapt, in agreement with local authorities, to the local situation and also to the capabilities of the lead-nation.

2006: Year of the Police  
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17. (C) The UK opened the discussion of training of Iraqi security forces, noting that significant progress had been made and that 2006 should concentrate on remaining weaknesses such as top level security structures in the MOD and MOI, logistical and life support, command and control, and leadership training. Citing Gen. Casey, Howard said the focus in 2006 should be on the police service, which is a year or so behind the armed forces. Asquith stressed the need to train the trainers as a way of guaranteeing Iraqi self-sufficiency. British Gen. Cooper's visit to Dhi Qar on February 9 is a good opportunity to study the potential for increased police training in detail.

¶8. (C) Italy stated that its Carabinieri in Dhi Qar have already trained 11,000 Iraqi police and 2,000 Iraqi army personnel (according to Castagnetti, Italy has trained all of the police requested by the Iraqi provincial government, essentially the entire Dhi Qar police force), and view expansion of this training positively. Italy prefers to concentrate its training at Camp Whitehorse in Dhi Qar province, though it welcomes trainees from other provinces, and offered to set up a police training headquarters there. It views MSU (Multinational Specialized Unit) and special police unit-type training as the most useful and also is prepared to consider adding border guard training, which would require the involvement of Italy's Guardia di Finanza. (Comment: While no one challenged Italy's training assertions, more information is needed as such numbers do not appear to be part of the overall MNSTC-I/Iraqi DOD developed police training program. End comment.)

¶9. (C) The U.S. side stressed the need to keep an eye on the security situation over the next few months, given the unsettled political environment and the continuing activity of militias. Embedding and partnering with Iraqi security forces could help accelerate the training programs.

¶10. (C) On the role of the NATO Training Mission in Iraq (NTM-I), Bardini stressed the need for consistency, coordination and a long-term commitment. Much progress has been made in training Iraqi security forces, but numbers simply denoting throughput of ISF trained can be deceiving. A general plan with clear needs (determined by the Iraqis) and benchmarks would allow for better synergies. NTM-I could expand its role both quantitatively and qualitatively, and could also serve as an umbrella for the general training of Iraqi armed forces. While Italy was prepared to see this mission extended to include police forces, Bardini acknowledged this remained a controversial issue within NATO.

At a separate meeting following the trilats, Bardini noted that helping the Iraqis to help themselves was a good selling

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point with the Italian public. Bardini also suggested that French opposition to decisions in Brussels about NTM-I can be mitigated by isolating France and dissuading Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg and Greece from following France's lead.

Pressing for National Unity Government  
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¶11. (C) Deutsch said the US was engaged in major outreach efforts to the broadest range of Iraqis possible -- but not those with blood on their hands. Many Sunnis, he said, actually have more faith in the coalition forces than in the (Shia-dominated) Iraqi security forces, while Shia are nervous about our outreach efforts to the Sunnis.

¶12. (C) La Francesca said that, with the upcoming announcement of the Iraqi election results, now was a good time for the international community to send the Iraqis a message that they should strive to form a national unity government. Amb. Melani echoed the need for bringing in the Sunnis without alienating others, and called for more regional involvement, especially by the Arab League.

¶13. (C) Referencing Foreign Secretary Straw's recent visit to Iraq, Asquith said many Sunnis regret taking part in the December elections, an inevitable reaction that he ascribed to unrealistic expectations. The message to the Sunnis should be stay in the political process -- or risk alienating yourselves from the international community. The game was to stay at the table. He warned that the Shia might view a national unity government that did not reflect the election results as cheating them of their electoral rights. Finally, Asquith agreed that Iraq's regional neighbors, and the Arab League in particular, can help by demonstrating to Iraqi Shia that their Sunni Arab neighbors are prepared to work with

them.

#### Broadening International Engagement

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¶14. (C) Noting that the December elections signaled a new phase in Iraq, Sessa said the coalition should be ready to step back and let the Iraqis take full ownership. At the same time, the security coalition should evolve toward increased participation of the international community -- especially the UN, EU, NATO, and the Arab League -- in capacity-building. Amb. Melani said many in the EU are willing but member states like France and Germany were skeptical of the EU's JustLex mission in Iraq and impeding its success. US-EU consultations are another potential venue for promoting greater international (EU) involvement. (Italy is also actively engaging the UN in New York.) Deutsch said that the Iraqis themselves need to reach out more to the international community, to demonstrate their ownership of the process and to garner broader support.

¶15. (C) Talo', responding to the UK's comment that the term "security coalition" scares off potential new partners, said that packaging is important for Italy, which prefers to avoid military vocabulary and instead focus on a "strategy for success." Public diplomacy strategies should be adapted for two different audiences, the Iraqis and each country's domestic constituency. For Italy, it is important to stress the success of the Italian presence and, as the Iraqis take ownership of their country, a new partnership based more on civilian rather than military support.

#### Transitioning Italian Forces

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¶16. (C) Lt. Gen. Castagnetti said Italy has provided all the training requested by the Iraqis in Dhi Qar and that they are now capable of handling the security situation there themselves. Dhi Qar is quiet and, if things continue to improve as expected, Italy's drawdown/transition to civilian-focused operations will be smooth regardless of who wins the April 9 elections in Iraq. However, if things deteriorate in Dhi Qar and the center-left wins in April, there could be problems. (Comment: Castagnetti did not elaborate, but he presumably meant there would be pressure

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within the center-left coalition to proceed with reducing the Italian troop presence despite deteriorating conditions. End comment.)

¶17. (C) Referring to Defense Minister Martino's address to Parliament, which occurred at the same time as the trilats, Sessa stressed Italy's "priority concept": any reconfiguration of Italy's military presence in Iraq would be done in very close coordination with coalition partners and the Iraqi government. Amerio added that regardless of numbers or timeframes cited, the Italian mission in Iraq would continue and adjustments would be made based on the evolving security situation on the ground, with the emphasis shifting from military to civilian activities. DAS Coulter noted that it is easier for the coalition partners to manage public diplomacy when such announcements are worked out in advance. La Francesca proposed that another trilat be held to follow up the day's conversations later in the spring. The U.S. and UK delegations concurred, and the three delegations agreed to follow up later on timing.

#### Opposition Seizes on Martino's Statements on Troop Withdrawal

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¶18. (C) Meanwhile, in a January 18 Deutsch meeting with members of Italy's opposition from the Daisy Party and Democrats of the Left, the oppositionists stressed that any withdrawal of Italy's troops from Iraq would occur in a phased manner, in consultation with the USG, and that there

would be no surprises that would jeopardize their relationship with the United States. However, they did not deny recent comments made to Pol M/C by a senior Prodi adviser (ROME 085) that the opposition would likely announce the withdrawal the day after April 9 elections and that the commitment would not be open-ended. At the same time, they brandished a press release by Minister of Defense Martino that said Italy will have reduced its presence by half in June and should complete its mission by the end of the year. Deputy S/I Deutsch replied that he was allergic to calendars.

He pointedly emphasized the need not only for full consultations before making decisions, but also to carefully manage public statements and perceptions.

19. (U) Deputy Senior Advisor Deutsch has cleared this cable.  
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